

# Getting Involved



## Tenants Handbook



### Getting Involved - Service Standard

We want to make sure you can have a say, in a way that suits you, about decisions that affect your home and community.

To help you get involved we will:

- Tell you about the opportunities available to get involved when you sign your tenancy agreement
- Involve you and your representatives in changes to services or policies
- Send you at least four newsletters (Housing Update) each year
- Tell you about the results of consultations you take part in or that particularly affect you
- Regularly ask your opinion of our services and give you feedback on responses to surveys and questionnaires

### Why become involved?

It is essential that tenants get involved as this helps to ensure that the services we provide meet the needs of the community you live in. You can also help us to be more efficient by challenging the work that we do. This process not only helps us to improve the service we provide but can also help you to learn how the service works. You will also be able to refer to your involvement when preparing a CV when you are looking for a change in employment.

### What rights do I have to information?

We hope that most of the information you require will be contained in this tenants' handbook. Some information will be published separately.

## Service User Participation Strategy

The Service User Participation Strategy explains to residents how they can get involved. It outlines how you can play an important part in influencing our decisions, shaping our future and improving our services to you. The strategy is the result of extensive consultation with our residents, the Tenant and Leaseholder Group, Leaseholder Forum, and Sheltered Housing Forum. There are a variety of ways for you to get involved and in a way that suits you - ranging from comments and feedback to getting involved with our consultation exercises and more formal involvement forums.

The Service User Participation Strategy aims to:

- Ensure that we are accountable to you
- Provide you with opportunities to be consulted and give feedback on housing services, policies and strategies
- Provide you with opportunities to become involved in all aspects of decision-making and performance monitoring of housing services, policies and strategies
- Guarantee a role for representative and accountable tenant associations in decision-making, performance monitoring, implementing service reviews and developing the Tenant Participation Compact

**A copy of our Service User Participation Strategy is available from Housing Services by telephoning 01268 882200.**

## Tenant Participation Compact

From April 2000, the Government required all Councils to have adopted a Tenant Participation Compact to ensure that all tenants have a say in how their Council manages their homes.

Tenant Participation Compacts are intended to be agreements between Councils and their tenants setting out:

- How tenants can get involved collectively in local decisions on housing matters which affect them
- What Councils and tenants want to achieve by working together in partnership to improve local services
- How the Tenant Participation Compact will be implemented and monitored to ensure it is working properly

A copy of the Tenants Participation Compact is available from the Housing Management Team by telephoning 01268 882200.

### **Involvement - Our promises to you**

#### **We will:**

- Review our methods of involvement annually
- Review our involvement arrangements with our customers every year to ensure they still meet the needs of our customers and partners and follow guidelines
- Ensure that the agendas and minutes of our meetings are issued within the agreed timescales
- Support all residents who wish to be involved, including those with specific needs, for example by using accessible venues for meetings, providing hearing loop systems etc

### **Some ways you can get involved**

#### **Community Based Groups**

Become a member of a Community Forum - this is a group of people from a small locality who want to help improve their local environment. If one doesn't already exist speak to your Housing Management Officer about setting one up.

## Neighbourhood Voices

Would you like to be a representative for your small community. You can act as the voice for your community and be the link to the Housing Service if it isn't possible to set up a Community Forum.

## Estates Inspections

There is a programme of estate inspections which are led by the Estates Officer and which involve the residents. When an inspection is approaching for your location you will be asked if you want to take part and assist with identifying the issues that need to be addressed. You will also receive information on action that needs to be taken following the inspection.

## Reading Panel

All our newsletters and tenant publications are assessed by tenants who are part of our Reading Panel before they are printed and circulated to all tenants. If you want to be involved but aren't able to easily access other options this may be something for you to consider. Members of the Reading Panel provide their comments on the information we are issuing so that we can make sure the information is suitable for everyone.

## Social Media

Where appropriate we will use Twitter to keep tenants informed of actions being taken or where there is information that we need to get to everyone quickly. Please do not use Twitter to report problems as this is not monitored by Housing Staff. Problems should be reported using the telephone numbers provided.

Please follow us  @CastlePointBC

### How do we talk to our tenants and leaseholders?

We make sure tenants and leaseholders are fully involved in decisions we take through our:

- Tenant and Leaseholder Group
- Sheltered Housing Forum
- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Leaseholders Forum
- Newsletters

We make sure tenants and leaseholders are involved in monitoring the delivery of our services, including:

- Customer care standards such as answering the telephone, responding to letters and e-mails
- Rent arrears collection
- Repair response times

### How do we monitor involvement?

We monitor opportunities to get involved to make sure they are accessible to everyone. We compare our services to those provided by similar organisations and share best practice.

We continuously monitor our performance to ensure the services we provide offer value for money.

### Help us to Improve Our Service

Your comments can make us more effective and efficient and can improve the community where you live.

If you would like to leave a comment, please visit our website, email us at [info@castlepoint.gov.uk](mailto:info@castlepoint.gov.uk) or write to us at Housing & Communities, Castle Point Borough Council, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 1TF.

## Your chance to change the way we provide our services!

If you would like to get involved please complete the form below or give us a call on 01268 882200

### Ways to be involved (please tick as appropriate)

- Join the Tenant & Leaseholder Group
- Join the Sheltered Housing Forum
- Join the Reading Panel
- Be a Neighbourhood Voice
- Join a Community Forum
- Write items for the Housing Update Newsletter
- Other, please state. . . . .

First Name . . . . . Last Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

. . . . .

Telephone No . . . . .

E-mail . . . . .

Please detach and return this completed form to:

Housing and Communities  
 Castle Point Borough Council  
 Council Offices  
 Kiln Road  
 Benfleet  
 Essex SS7 1TF

Or alternatively scan and e-mail to [tenancyofficers@castlepoint.gov.uk](mailto:tenancyofficers@castlepoint.gov.uk)

## How to contact us

**Housing Services** . . . . . 01268 882200  
(Housing Hot Key Press 0)

**Housing Repairs** . . . . . 01268 882326

**Housing Repairs** (out of hours) . . 01268 758357

**Housing Rents** . . . . . 01268 882481